

History of Feminism **Wikipedia (2012)**

The **history of feminism** involves the story of [feminist movements](#) and of feminist thinkers. Depending on time, culture and country, feminists around the world have sometimes had different causes and goals. Most western feminist historians assert that all movements that work to obtain [women's rights](#) should be considered feminist movements, even when they did not (or do not) apply the term to themselves. Other historians assert that the term should be limited to the modern feminist movement and its descendants. Those historians use the label "[protofeminist](#)" to describe earlier movements.

The history of the modern western feminist movements is divided into three "waves". Each is described as dealing with different aspects of the same feminist issues. The [first wave](#) refers to the movement of the 19th through early 20th centuries, which dealt mainly with [suffrage](#), working conditions and educational rights for women and girls. The [second wave](#) (1960s-1980s) dealt with the inequality of laws, as well as [cultural](#) inequalities and the role of women in society. The [third wave of feminism](#) (late 1980s-early 2000s (decade)), is seen as both a continuation of the second wave and a response to the perceived failures.

Introduction

Main articles: [Feminism](#) and [Feminist movement](#)

The terms "feminism" or "feminist" first appeared in France and The Netherlands in 1872 (as *les féministes*), Great Britain in the 1890s, and the United States in 1910. The [Oxford English Dictionary](#) lists 1894 for the first appearance of "feminist" and 1895 for "feminism". The UK [Daily News](#) first introduced "feminist" to the English language, importing it from France and branding it as dangerous. "What our Paris Correspondent describes as a 'Feminist' group... in the French Chamber of Deputies". Prior to that time, "Woman's Rights" was probably the term used most commonly, hence Queen Victoria's description of this "mad, wicked folly of 'Woman's Rights'".

[Defining feminism](#) can be challenging, but a broad understanding of it includes the acting, speaking, writing, and advocating on behalf of women's issues and rights and identifying injustice to females in the social status quo.

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Protofeminism

Main article: [Protofeminism](#)



[Christine de Pizan](#) presents her book to Queen [Isabeau of Bavaria](#).

People and activists who discussed or advanced women's issues prior to the existence of the [feminist movement](#) are sometimes labeled *protofeminist*. Some scholars, however, criticize the use of this term. Some argue that it diminishes the importance of earlier contributions, while others argue that feminism does not have a single, linear history as implied by terms such as *protofeminist* or *postfeminist*.

French writer [Christine de Pizan](#) (1364 – c. 1430) the author of [The Book of the City of Ladies](#) and *Epître au Dieu d'Amour* (Epistle to the God of Love) is cited by Simone de Beauvoir, as the first woman to write about the relation of the sexes and to denounce misogyny. Later writers include [Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa](#) and [Modesta di Pozzo di Forzi](#), who worked in the 16th century, up to and including the 17th-century writers [Hannah Woolley](#) in England, [Juana Inés de la Cruz](#) in Mexico, [Marie Le Jars de Gournay](#), [Anne Bradstreet](#), and [François Poullain de la Barre](#) are sometimes described as [protofeminist](#).

17th century

One of the most important feminist writers in the English language in the 17th century was [Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle-upon-Tyne](#).

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18th century: the Age of Enlightenment



First edition print of *Vindication of the Rights of Woman: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*

[The Age of Enlightenment](#) was characterised by secular intellectual reasoning, and a flowering of philosophical writing. Many Enlightenment philosophers defended the rights of women, including [Jeremy Bentham](#) (1781), [Marquis de Condorcet](#) (1790), and, perhaps most notably, [Mary Wollstonecraft](#) (1792).

Jeremy Bentham

The English [utilitarian](#) and [classical liberal](#) philosopher [Jeremy Bentham](#) said that it was the placing of women in a legally inferior position that made him choose the career of a reformist, at the age of eleven. Bentham spoke for a complete equality between sexes including the right to vote and to participate in the government, and opposed the strongly different sexual moral standards to women and men.

In his *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1781) Bentham strongly condemned the common practice in many countries to deny women's rights because of their allegedly inferior minds. Bentham gave many examples of able female regents.

Marquis de Condorcet

(Marie Jean Antoine) Nicolas de Caritat (the [Marquis de Condorcet](#)) was a mathematician, classical liberal politician, leading [French revolutionary](#), republican and [Voltairean](#) anti-

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clericalist. He was also a fierce defender of [human rights](#), including the equality of women and the [abolition of slavery](#), already in the 1780s. He advocated [women's suffrage](#) for the new government, writing an article for *Journal de la Société de 1789*, and by publishing *De l'admission des femmes au droit de cité* ("[For the Admission to the Rights of Citizenship For Women](#)") in 1790.

Wollstonecraft and *A Vindication*

Main articles: [A Vindication of the Rights of Woman](#) and [Mary Wollstonecraft](#)



Mary Wollstonecraft by [John Opie](#) (c. 1797)

Perhaps the most cited feminist writer of the time was [Mary Wollstonecraft](#), often characterised as the first feminist philosopher. [A Vindication of the Rights of Woman](#) (1792) is one of the first works that can unambiguously be called feminist, although by modern standards her comparison of women to the nobility, the elite of society (coddled, fragile, and in danger of intellectual and moral sloth) may at first seem dated as a feminist argument. Wollstonecraft identified the education and upbringing of women as creating their limited expectations based on a self-image dictated by the male [gaze](#). Despite her perceived inconsistencies (Brody refers to the "Two Wollstonecrafts") reflective of problems that had no easy answers, this book remains a foundation stone of feminist thought.

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Wollstonecraft believed that both genders contributed to inequality. She took it for granted that women had considerable power over men, but that both would require education to ensure the necessary changes in social attitudes. Her legacy remains in the continued need for women to speak out and tell their stories. Her own achievements speak to her own determination given her humble origins and scant education. Wollstonecraft attracted the mockery of [Samuel Johnson](#), who described her and her ilk as "Amazons of the pen". Given his relationship with [Hester Thrale](#) it would appear that Johnson's problem was not with intelligent educated women, but that they should encroach onto a male territory of writing. For many commentators, Wollstonecraft represents the first codification of "equality" feminism, or a refusal of the [feminine](#), a child of the Enlightenment.

Other important writers

Other important writers of the time included [Catherine Macaulay](#) who argued in 1790 that the apparent weakness of women was caused by their miseducation. In other parts of Europe, [Hedvig Charlotta Nordenflycht](#) was writing in Sweden, and what is thought to be the first scientific society for women was founded in [Middelburg](#), in the south of Holland in 1785. This was the Natuurkundig Genootschap der Dames (Women's Society for Natural Knowledge). which met regularly to 1881, finally dissolving in 1887. Journals for women which focused on science became popular during this period as well. Other authors, however, point out that women have been scientists for 4,000 years.

19th century

The feminine ideal

19th-century feminists reacted not only to the injustices they saw but also against the increasingly suffocating Victorian image of the "proper" role of women and their "sphere". This was the "" as typified in Victorian [conduct books](#) by (for example) [Sarah Stickney Ellis](#) (1799–1872) or [Mrs. Beeton](#) (1836–1865). [The Angel in the House](#) (1854) and *El ángel del hogar*, bestsellers by [Coventry Patmore](#) and Maria del Pilar Sinués de Marco, came to symbolise the Victorian feminine ideal.

Feminism in fiction

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Just as [Jane Austen](#) had addressed the restricted lives women faced in the early part of the century, [Charlotte Brontë](#), [Anne Brontë](#), [Elizabeth Gaskell](#) and [George Eliot](#) depicted women's misery and frustration. In her autobiographical novel [Ruth Hall](#) (1854), American journalist [Fanny Fern](#) describes her own struggle to support her children as a newspaper columnist after her husband's untimely death. [Louisa May Alcott](#) penned a strongly feminist novel, [A Long Fatal Love Chase](#) (1866), that concerns a young woman's attempts to flee from her bigamist husband and become independent.

Some male authors, too, recognised the injustice women faced. The novels of [George Meredith](#), [George Gissing](#) and [Thomas Hardy](#), and the plays of [Henrik Ibsen](#), also outlined the plight of women of the time. Meredith's [Diana of the Crossways](#) (1885) is an account of Caroline Norton's life. One critic later called Ibsen's plays "feministic propaganda".

Marion Reid and Caroline Norton

At the beginning of the 19th century, although individual women, and some men, were speaking out, it is doubtful how influential they were, other than to create awareness. There was little sign of change in the political or social order, nor any evidence of a recognizable women's movement. By the end of the 19th century the voices of concern began to coalesce into something more tangible, paralleling the emergence of a more rigid social model and code of conduct, that [Marion Reid](#) (and later [John Stuart Mill](#)) would refer to as a "Womanliness" that admitted to "self-extinction". While the increasing emphasis on feminine virtue partly stirred the call for a woman's movement, the tensions that this role duality caused for women plagued many early-19th-century feminists with doubt and worry, and fueled opposing views.

In [Scotland](#), Reid published her influential *A plea for women* in 1843 which set an agenda on both sides of the Atlantic, including voting rights for women.

[Caroline Norton](#) became active in advocating changes to British law. Upon entering into an abusive marriage she had become painfully aware that legally women were "non-existent". The publicity that she generated including her appeal to Queen Victoria helped change the situation for married women and child custody in England.

Florence Nightingale and Frances Power Cobbe



[Florence Nightingale](#)

While many women including Norton were wary of organized movements, their actions and words often motivated and inspired such movements. Amongst these was [Florence Nightingale](#) whose conviction that women had all the potential of men but none of the opportunities drove her to a career that would make her a national figure as a scientist and administrator even if the popular image of her at the time emphasized her feminine virtues more. The paradox of the gulf between the achievements which we recognize now, and how she was portrayed underline the plight that women of talent and determination faced during the mid-1850s.

Like all political movements, feminism includes several different ideological theories and ideas. Feminists could not always be supportive of each other's efforts, and also distanced themselves from others. Britishwoman [Harriet Martineau](#) and many others dismissed Wollstonecraft's contributions as dangerous, and deplored Norton's candidness, but seized on the abolition of slavery campaign she had witnessed in the United States, as one that should logically be applied to women. Her *Society in America* was pivotal in that for the first time it caught the imagination of women who urged her to take up their cause.

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[Frances Cobbe](#)

[Anna Doyle Wheeler](#) had come under the influence of the [Saint Simonian](#) socialists while working in France, advocated suffrage and attracted the attention of [Benjamin Disraeli](#), the Conservative leader, as a dangerous radical on a par with [Jeremy Bentham](#). Later she was to be the inspiration for early socialist and feminist advocate [William Thompson](#), author of the first work published in English to advocate full equality of rights for women, the 1825 "Appeal of One Half of the Human Race...".

Earlier centuries had concentrated on women's exclusion from education as the key to their being relegated to domestic roles and denied advancement. The education of women in the 19th century was no better, and [Frances Power Cobbe](#) was but one of many women who were calling for reform. But now many other issues were starting to gain attention including marital and property rights, and domestic violence. Nevertheless women like Martineau and Cobbe in Britain, and [Margaret Fuller](#) in America, were achieving journalistic employment which placed them in a position to influence other women. Women like Cobbe were referring to "[Woman's Rights](#)", not just in the abstract, but as an identifiable cause.

The ladies of Langham Place

For more details on this topic, see [English Woman's Journal](#).

[Barbara Leigh Smith](#) and her friends started to meet regularly during the 1850s in Langham Place in London to discuss the need for women to present a united voice to achieve reform.

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These "Ladies of Langham Place" included [Bessie Rayner Parkes](#) and [Anna Jameson](#). They focused on education, employment and marital law. One of the causes they vigorously pursued became the Married Women's Property Committee of 1855. They collected thousands of signatures for petitions for legislative reform, some of which were successful. Smith had also attended the first women's convention in [Seneca Falls, New York](#) in America in 1848.

Smith and Parker wrote many articles, both separately and together, on education and employment opportunities, and like Norton in the same year, Smith summarized the legal framework for injustice in 1854 in her *A Brief Summary of the Laws of England concerning Women*. Playing an important role in the [English Women's Journal](#), she was able to reach large numbers of women, and the response of women to this journal led to their creation of the [Society for Promoting the Employment of Women](#) (SPEW). Smith's Married Women's Property committee collected 26,000 signatures to change the law for all women including unmarried.

[Harriet Taylor](#) published her *Enfranchisement* in 1851, and wrote about the inequities of family law. In 1853 she married [John Stuart Mill](#), providing him with much of the subject material for [The Subjection of Women](#). Taylor's relatively low profile after her marriage has been a subject of speculation.

[Emily Davies](#) was another woman who would encounter the Langham group, and with [Elizabeth Garrett](#) would help create branches of SPEW outside of London.

Educational reform

Main article: [Female education](#)

The interrelated themes of barriers to education and employment continued to form the backbone of feminist thought in the 19th century, as described, for instance by Harriet Martineau in her 1859 article "Female Industry" in the *Edinburgh Journal*. The economy was changing but women's lot was not. Martineau, however, remained a moderate, for practical reasons, and unlike Cobbe, did not support the emerging call for the vote.

Slowly the efforts of women like Davies and the Langham group started to make inroads. [Queen's College](#) (1848) and [Bedford College](#) (1849) in London were starting to offer some education to women from 1848, and by 1862 Davies was establishing a committee to persuade the universities to allow women to sit for the recently established in 1858. Local Examinations, with partial success (1865). A year later she published *The Higher Education of Women*. She and Leigh Smith founded the first higher educational institution for women, with 5 students, which became [Girton College, Cambridge](#) in 1869, followed by [Newnham College, Cambridge](#) in 1871 and [Lady Margaret Hall](#) at Oxford in 1879. Bedford had started awarding degrees the previous year. Despite these measurable advances, few could take advantage of them and life for women students was still difficult.

In the [Ilbert Bill](#) controversy in 1883, Bengali women who supported the bill responded by claiming that they were more educated than the English women opposed to the bill, and pointed out that more [Indian](#) women had degrees than British women did at the time.

As part of the continuing dialogue between British and American feminists, [Elizabeth Blackwell](#), one of the first women in the US to graduate in medicine (1849), lectured in Britain with Langham support. They also supported [Elizabeth Garrett's](#) attempts to assail the walls of British medical education against virulent opposition, eventually taking her degree in France. Garrett's very successful campaign to run for office on the London School Board in 1870 is another example of how a small band of very determined women were starting to reach positions of influence at the level of local government and public bodies.

Women's campaigns



Josephine Butler

Campaigns gave women the opportunity to test their new political skills, for disparate elements to come together, to join forces with other social reform groups. One had been the campaign for the Married Women's Property Act, eventually passed in 1882. Next was the campaign to repeal the [Contagious Diseases Acts](#) of 1864, 1866 and 1869, which brought together women's groups and utilitarian liberals such as [John Stuart Mill](#).

Women in general were outraged by the inherent inequity and misogyny of the legislation and for the first time women in large numbers took up the rights of prostitutes. Prominent critics included Blackwell, Nightingale, and Martineau and Elizabeth Wolstenholme. Elizabeth Garrett did not support the campaign, though her sister [Millicent](#) did, later admitting the campaign had done good.

However, [Josephine Butler](#), already experienced in prostitution issues, a charismatic leader and a seasoned campaigner, emerged as the natural leader of what became the Ladies National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts (1869). This demonstrated the potential power of an organised lobby group. The association successfully argued that the Acts not only demeaned prostitutes, but all women and men

too by containing a blatant double sexual standard. Butler's activities resulted in the radicalisation of many moderate women. The Acts were repealed in 1886.

On a smaller scale was [Annie Besant](#)'s campaign for the rights of [match girls](#) and against the appalling conditions under which they worked demonstrated how to raise public concern over social issues.

Waves of feminism

First wave

Main articles: [First-wave feminism](#) and [History of women in the United States](#)



[Elizabeth Cady Stanton](#)(seated) and [Susan B. Anthony](#)

First-wave feminism involved a period of feminist activity during the 19th and early 20th centuries, especially in Europe and in the [Anglosphere](#); it focused primarily on gaining the right of women's [suffrage](#), the right to be educated, better working conditions and double sexual standards. The term, "first-wave", was coined retrospectively after the term [second-wave feminism](#) began to be used to describe a newer feminist movement that focused as much on fighting social and cultural inequalities as further political inequalities.

In the [U.S.](#), leaders of the feminist movement campaigned for the [abolition of slavery](#) and [Temperance](#) prior to championing women's rights. American first-wave feminism

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involved a wide range of women, some belonging to conservative Christian groups (such as [Frances Willard](#) and the [Woman's Christian Temperance Union](#)), others resembling the diversity and radicalism of much of [second-wave feminism](#) (such as Stanton, Anthony, [Matilda Joslyn Gage](#) and the [National Woman Suffrage Association](#), of which Stanton was president). In the United States first-wave feminism is considered to have ended with the passage of the [Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution](#) (1919), granting women the right to vote in the United States.

The antislavery campaign of the 1830s provided a perfect cause for women to take up, identify with and learn political skills from. Attempts to exclude women only fuelled their convictions further. [Sarah](#) and [Angelina Grimké](#) moved rapidly from the emancipation of slaves to the emancipation of women. The most influential feminist writer of the time was the colourful journalist [Margaret Fuller](#) whose [Woman in the Nineteenth Century](#) was published in 1845. Her dispatches from Europe for the [New York Tribune](#) helped create a universality in the women's rights movement.

[Elizabeth Cady Stanton](#) and [Lucretia Mott](#) met in 1840 while en route to London where they were shunned as women by the male leadership of the first . In 1848, Mott and Stanton held [a woman's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York](#), where a [declaration of independence for women](#) was drafted. [Lucy Stone](#) helped to organize the first [National Women's Rights Convention](#) in 1850, a much larger event at which [Sojourner Truth](#), [Abby Kelley Foster](#) and others spoke, and which sparked [Susan B. Anthony](#) to take up the cause of women's rights. [Barbara Leigh Smith](#) met with Mott in 1858, strengthening the link between the feminist movements on each side of the Atlantic.

Stanton and [Matilda Joslyn Gage](#) saw the church as a major obstacle to women's rights. They therefore welcomed the emerging literature on matriarchy, and both Gage and Stanton produced works on this topic: they collaborated on [The Woman's Bible](#). Stanton wrote "" and Gage wrote "", neatly inverting [Johann Jakob Bachofen](#)'s thesis and adding a unique [epistemological](#) perspective, the critique of objectivity and the perception of the subjective.

Stanton made an astute observation regarding assumptions of female inferiority "The worst feature of these assumptions is that women themselves believe them". However this attempt to replace "androcentric" theological tradition with a "gynecentric" view made little headway in the women's movement which was dominated by religious elements, and she and Gage were largely ignored by subsequent generations.

By 1913, Feminism (originally capitalized) became widely known in the U.S. Major issues in the 1910s and 1920s included [suffrage](#), economics and employment, sexualities and families, war and peace, and a [Constitutional amendment for equality](#). Both equality and difference were seen as routes to women's empowerment. Organizations at the time included the [National Woman's Party](#), suffrage advocacy groups such as the [National American Woman Suffrage Association](#) and the [National League of Women Voters](#), career associations such as the [American Association of University Women](#), the [National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs](#), and the [National Women's Trade Union League](#), war and peace groups such as the [Women's International League for Peace and Freedom](#) and the [International Council of Women](#), alcohol-focused groups like the [Woman's Christian Temperance Union](#) and the [Women's Organization for National Prohibition Reform](#), and among organizations centered on race and gender the [National Association of Colored Women](#). Leaders and theoreticians then included [Jane Addams](#), [Ida B. Wells-Barnett](#), [Alice Paul](#), [Carrie Chapman Catt](#), [Margaret Sanger](#), and [Charlotte Perkins Gilman](#).

Suffrage

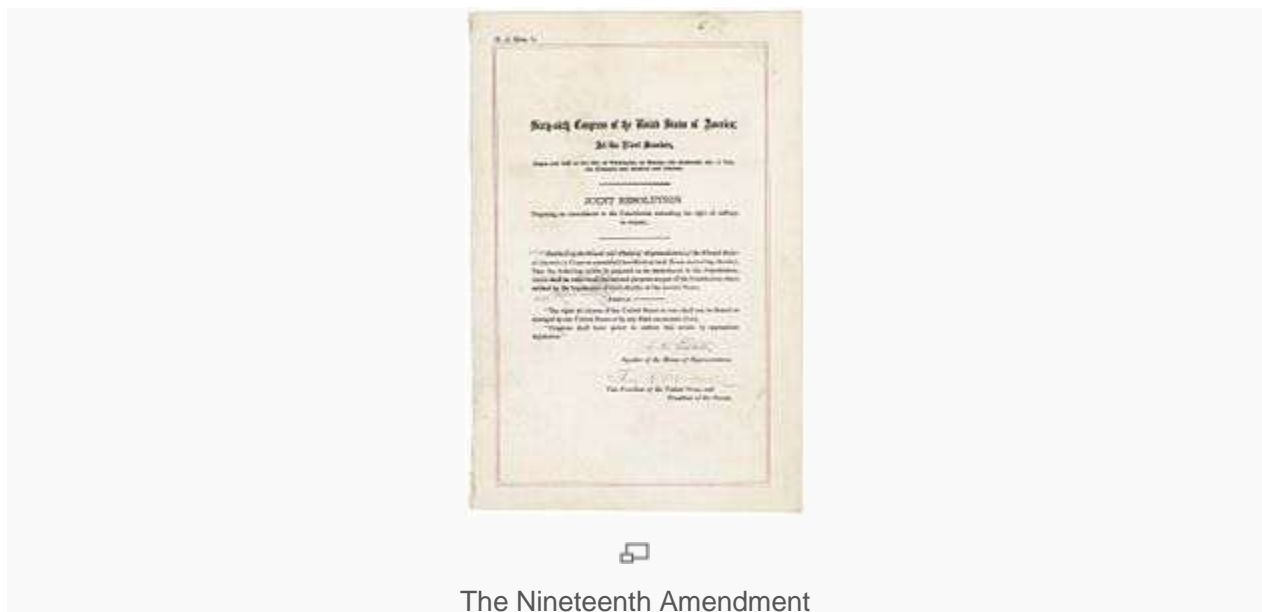
Main articles: [Women's suffrage](#) and [Timeline of women's suffrage](#)

The fight for [women's suffrage](#) represents one of the most fundamental struggles of women, because explicitly denying them representation in the legislature and public governmental bodies gave an unambiguous message of second-class citizenship. No campaign has embedded itself so deeply in popular imagination than that of women's suffrage over the past 250 years.

However it took a long time to work its way up the list of priorities to gradually become the dominant issue. The French Revolution accelerated this, with the assertions of Condorcet and de Gouges, and it was women who led the [march on Versailles](#) in 1789. This reached its climax with the founding of the [Society of Revolutionary Republican Women](#) (1793) which included suffrage on its agenda, before being suppressed at the end of that year. However, this ensured that the issue was on the European political agenda.

German women were involved in the [Vormärz](#), a prelude to the 1848 revolution. In Italy Clara Maffei, [Cristina Trivulzio Belgiojoso](#) and Ester Martini Currica were politically active in the events leading up to the events of 1848 there. In Britain suffrage emerged in the writings of Wheeler and Thompson in the 1820s, and Reid, Taylor and [Anne Knight](#) in the 1840s.

The suffragettes



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Author and scholar [Helen Kendrick Johnson](#) opposed women's suffrage.

The Langham Place ladies again played a central role in women's suffrage, and set up a suffrage committee in 1866 at a meeting at Elizabeth Garrett's home, renamed the London Society for Women's Suffrage in 1867. Soon similar committees had spread across the country, raising petitions, and worked closely with JS Mill. Denied outlets by establishment periodicals, women like [Lydia Becker](#) started the in 1870.

Other publications included [Richard Pankhurst's Englishwoman's Review](#) (1866). Tactical disputes were the biggest problem, and the membership of various groups varied over time. One issue was whether men like Mill should be involved. As it was Mill also withdrew as the movement became more aggressive with each disappointment. The political pressure ensured debate, but year after year was defeated in parliament.

Despite this, the women benefited from their increasing political experience, which translated into slow progress at the level of local government and public bodies. However, the years of frustration took their toll, and many women became increasingly radicalised. Some refused to pay taxes, and the [Pankhurst family](#) emerged as the dominant influence of the movement, having also founded the [Women's Franchise League](#) in 1889.

International suffrage

The Isle of Man was the first free standing jurisdiction to grant women the vote (1881), followed by New Zealand in 1893, where [Kate Sheppard](#) had pioneered reform. Some Australian states had also granted women the vote. This included Victoria for a brief period

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(1863-5), South Australia (1894), and Western Australia (1899). Australian women received the vote at the Federal level in 1902, Finland in 1906, and Norway initially in 1907 (completed in 1913).

20th century



Suffrage parade in New York, May 6, 1912.

Early 20th century: the Edwardian era

Women's suffragists and the prelude to war

The Edwardian era saw a loosening of Victorian rigidity and complacency; women had more employment opportunities, and were more active, leading to a relaxing of clothing restrictions.

Looking back from now, western women's rights movements seem to be dominated by the increasing clamour for political reform and votes for women. Books, articles, speeches, pictures and papers from the period however, show a diverse range of theme's being discussed in the public discourse. In The Netherlands for instance, educational rights, rights to medical care, better working conditions, peace and double sexual standards were main feminist issues at the time. And feminists called themselves feminists without a lot of ado.

The charismatic and controversial [Pankhursts](#) took the political initiative, forming the [Women's Social and Political Union](#) (WSPU) in 1903. As Emmeline Pankhurst put it,

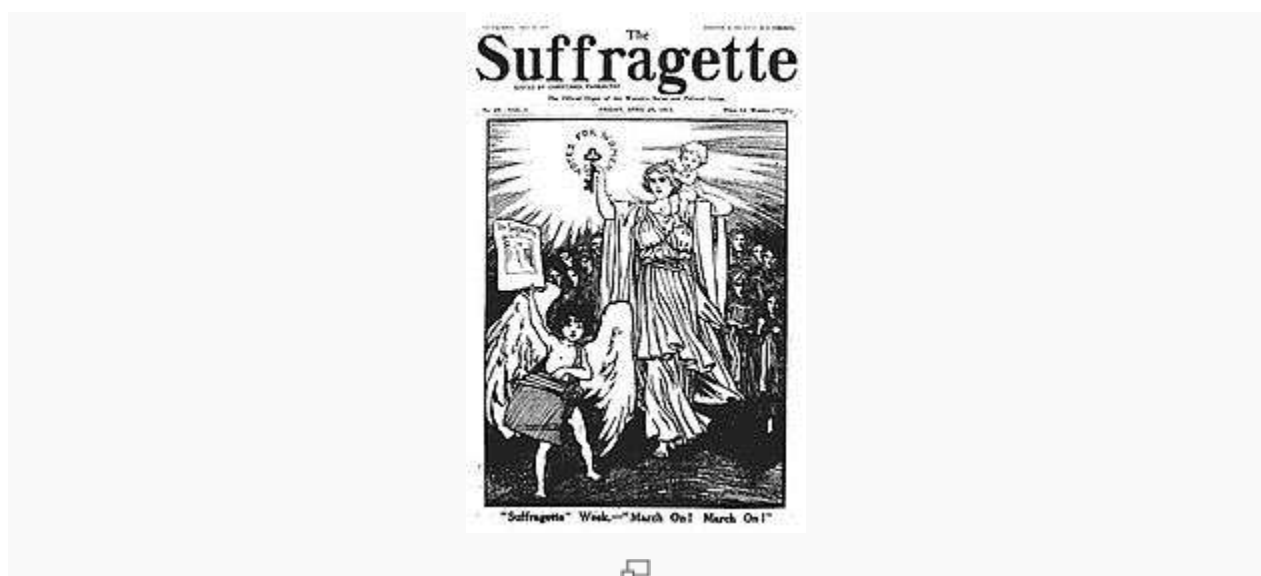
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votes for women were seen then as no longer "a right, but as a desperate necessity". At the state level, Australia and the United States had already given the vote to some women, and American feminists such as [Susan B Anthony](#) (1902) visited Britain. While the WSPU is the best known suffrage group, it was only one of many, such as the [Women's Freedom League](#) and the [National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies](#) (NUWSS) led by [Millicent Garrett Fawcett](#). WSPU was largely a family affair, although externally financed. [Christabel Pankhurst](#) became the dominant figure and gathered friends such as [Annie Kenney](#), [Flora Drummond](#), , [Ethel Smythe](#), and Norah Dacre Fox later known as [Norah Elam](#) around her. Veterans such as Elizabeth Garrett also joined.

In 1906 the [Daily Mail](#) first labeled these women "[suffragettes](#)" as a form of ridicule, but the term was quickly embraced in Britain to describe a more militant form of suffragist, which were becoming increasingly visible with their marches and distinctive Green, Purple and White emblems, while the [Artists' Suffrage League](#) created dramatic graphics. Even underwear in WPSU colours appeared in stores. They quickly learned new ways of exploiting the media and photography. The visual record they have left remains vivid, such as the 1914 photograph of Emmeline, shown here. As the movement became more active deep divisions appeared with older leaders of the movement parting company with the radicals. Sometimes the splits were ideological, and others tactical. Even Christabel's sister, [Sylvia](#), was expelled.



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Cover of *The Suffragette* April 25, 1913. Artist unknown. (After Delacroix's *Liberty leading the people*, 1830).

Slowly but surely the protests became more vigorous and included heckling, banging on doors, smashing shop windows, and eventually, by 1914, arson. In 1913, one member of the group, [Emily Davison](#), sacrificed herself on Derby Day, dying under the King's horse. These tactics produced mixed results of sympathy and alienation and many protesters were imprisoned, creating an increasingly embarrassing situation for the government.

Matters progressively worsened, with hunger strikes, then risky force feeding, and eventually the notorious Prisoners (Temporary Discharge for Ill Health) Act 1913, nicknamed the [Cat and Mouse Act](#) which allowed women to be released when their illness or injury became dangerously acute, but officers were then not prevented from arresting and charging these women again once they recovered. It could be argued, however, as did [Reginald McKenna](#), the Home Secretary, that this was relatively humane, since a number of these women appeared ready to die for their cause.

If the aims were to reveal institutional sexism in British society, women's suffragists certainly created publicity around the issue. They also inadvertently drew attention to the brutality of the legal system at the time.

Feminist science fiction

Main article: [Feminist science fiction](#)

At the beginning of the 20th century, [feminist science fiction](#) emerged as a sub-genre of [science fiction](#) which tends to deal with women's roles in society. Women writers in the [utopian](#) literature movement of the 19th and early 20th centuries, at the time of [first wave feminism](#), often addressed sexism. [Charlotte Perkins Gilman](#) did so in [Herland](#) (1915), for example. [The Sultana's Dream](#) (1905) by [Bengali Muslim feminist](#), [Roquia Sakhawat Hussain](#), depicts a gender-reversed [purdah](#) in a futuristic world.

During the 1920s writers such as [Clare Winger Harris](#) and [Gertrude Barrows Bennett](#) published science fiction stories written from female perspectives and occasionally

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dealt with gender and sexuality-based topics. Meanwhile, much [pulp science fiction](#) published during 1920s and 1930s carried an exaggerated view of masculinity along with sexist portrayals of women. By the 1960s science fiction was combining sensationalism with political and technological critiques of society. With the advent of feminism, women's roles were questioned in this "subversive, mind expanding genre."

[Feminist](#) science fiction poses questions about social issues such as how society constructs gender roles, the role reproduction plays in defining gender and the unequal political and personal power of men and women. Some of the most notable feminist science fiction works have illustrated these themes using [utopias](#) to explore a society in which gender differences or gender power imbalances do not exist, or [dystopias](#) to explore worlds in which gender inequalities are intensified, thus asserting a need for feminist work to continue.

Mid-20th century: interbellum

In the First World War women entered the labour market in unprecedented numbers, often in new sectors. They discovered that their work outside the home was now valued, but also left large numbers of women bereaved and with a net loss of household income. Meanwhile the large numbers of men killed and wounded created a major shift in demographic composition. War also split the feminist groups, with many opposed to the war, while other women became involved in the [White Feather](#) campaign.

Certain recent feminist scholars, such as and Nancy Cott, also point out World War I's conservativizing effect in some countries, noting the reinforcement of traditional imagery as well as literature directed towards motherhood. These phenomena during World War I and between the two wars have been called the "nationalization of women."

In the years between the wars, women continued to fight discrimination and opposition to women's rights from the establishment and the media. In [Virginia Woolf's](#) *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf describes the extent of the backlash and her frustration at the waste of so much talent. Important writers of the time also included [Rebecca West](#). Although the word "feminism" was now in use, the media and others gave it such a negative image, that

women were afraid to embrace it. By 1938, Woolf was writing, in [Three Guineas](#), "an old word...that has much harm in its day and is now obsolete". On another occasion she had to defend West, who had been attacked as a "feminist". Woolf also started to paint lesbian sexuality in a positive light "women...had almost always been seen in relation to men", and to examine the constructs of gender more minutely. West has perhaps best been remembered for her comment "I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat, or a prostitute."

In the 1920s, the non-traditional styles and attitudes of [flappers](#) gained popularity among women in the U.S. and U.K.

Electoral reform

Women's demand for the vote could no longer be ignored, and the [Representation of the People Act 1918](#) enacted in February of that year gave men near-universal suffrage, and the vote to women over 30 years of age. [Representation of the People Act 1928](#) finally provided equal suffrage for men and women. It also shifted the socioeconomic make up of the electorate towards the working class, favouring the [Labour Party](#) who were more sympathetic to women's issues. The first election was held in [December](#), and gave Labour the most seats in the house to date. The electoral reforms also allowed women to run for parliament. Although [Christabel Pankhurst](#) narrowly failed to win a seat in 1918, in 1919 and 1920 both [Lady Astor](#) and [Margaret Wintringham](#) won seats for the Conservatives and Liberals respectively, by succeeding their husband's seats. Labour swept to power in 1924, including [Ellen Wilkinson](#). [Constance Markievicz](#) (Sinn Féin) was the first woman to be elected, in Ireland in 1918, but as an Irish nationalist, refused to take her seat. Astor's proposal to form a women's party in 1929 was unsuccessful, which some historians feel was a missed opportunity, and there were still only 12 women in parliament by 1940. Women gained considerable electoral experience over the next few years as a series of minority governments ensured almost annual elections. Close affiliation with Labour also proved to be a problem for NUSEC, which had little support in the Conservative party. However, their persistence with Prime Minister [Stanley Baldwin](#) was rewarded by the passage of the [Representation of the People \(Equal Franchise\) Act 1928](#).

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Other jurisdictions

Women received the vote in [Denmark](#) and [Iceland](#) in 1915 (full in 1919), the [USSR](#) in 1917, [Austria](#), [Germany](#) and [Canada](#) in 1918, and many countries including the [Netherlands](#) in 1919, and Turkey and [South Africa](#) in 1930. [French](#) women did not receive the vote till 1945. [Liechtenstein](#) was one of the last countries, in 1984.

The women's movement and social reform

As with many movements, women soon discovered that political change does not necessarily translate into a noticeable change in circumstances, and with economic recession they were the most vulnerable sector of the workforce. Some women who had held jobs prior to the war were obliged to give them up to returning soldiers, and many had been made redundant. With limited franchise, the NUWSS needed to change its role. The new organisation, the (NUSEC) still advocated equality in franchise but extended its scope to examine equality in the social and economic area. Legislative reform was sought for those laws that were discriminatory, including family law and [prostitution](#). One area of division which is significant in the light of later developments was between *equality* and *equity*, which addressed accommodation to allow women to overcome barriers to fulfillment. In more recent years this has been referred to as the "equality vs. difference conundrum". [Eleanor Rathbone](#), who became an MP in 1929, succeeded [Millicent Garrett](#) as president in 1919. She expressed the critical need for consideration of *difference* in gender relationships as "what women need to fulfill the potentialities of their own natures". A more formal split appeared with the 1924 Labour government's social reforms, with a splinter group of strict egalitarians forming the [Open Door Council](#) in May 1926. This eventually became an international movement, and continued till 1965. Other important social legislation of this period included the [Sex Disqualification \(Removal\) Act 1919](#) (which opened professions to women), and the . In 1932, NUSEC separated advocacy from education, and continued the former activities as the and education became the role of the [Townswomen's Guild](#). The council continued until the end of the Second World War.

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In 1921, [Margaret Mackworth](#) (Lady Rhondda) founded the [Six Point Group](#), which included [Rebecca West](#). As a political lobby group it aimed at political, occupational, moral, social, economic and legal equality. Thus it was ideologically allied with the Open Door Council, rather than National Council. It also lobbied at an international level, such as the [League of Nations](#), and continued its work till 1983. In retrospect both ideological groups were influential in advancing women's rights in their own way. Despite women being admitted to the House of Commons from 1918, Mackworth, a Viscountess in her own right, spent a lifetime fighting to take her seat in the House of Lords against bitter opposition, a battle which only achieved its goal in the year of her death (1958). This revealed the weaknesses of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act. Mackworth also founded [Time and Tide](#) which became the group's journal, and to which West, Virginia Woolf, [Rose Macaulay](#) and many others contributed. A number of other women's periodicals also appeared in the 1920s, including , and [Good Housekeeping](#), but whose content reflect very different aspirations. In 1925 Rebecca West wrote in *Time and Tide* something that reflected not only the movement's need to redefine itself post suffrage, but a continual need for re-examination of goals. "*When those of our army whose voices are inclined to coolly tell us that the day of sex-antagonism is over and henceforth we have only to advance hand in hand with the male, I do not believe it.*"

Reproductive rights



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As feminism sought to redefine itself, new issues rose to the surface, one of which was reproductive rights. Even discussing the issue could be hazardous. [Annie Besant](#) had been tried in 1877 for publishing [Charles Knowlton's](#) , a work on family planning, under the [Obscene Publications Act](#) 1857. Knowlton had previously been convicted in the United States. She and her colleague [Charles Bradlaugh](#) were convicted but acquitted on appeal, the subsequent publicity resulting in a decline in the birth rate. Not discouraged in the slightest, Besant followed this with .

Similarly in America, [Margaret Sanger](#) was prosecuted for her [Family Limitation](#) under the Comstock Act 1873, in 1914, and fled to Britain where she met with [Marie Stopes](#) until it was safe for her to return. Sanger continued to risk prosecution, and her work was prosecuted in Britain. Stopes was never prosecuted but was regularly denounced for her work in promoting birth control. In 1917 Sanger started the Birth Control Review. In 1926, Sanger gave a lecture on birth control to the women's auxiliary of the Ku Klux Klan in Silver Lake, New Jersey, which she referred to as a "weird experience". Even more controversial was the establishment of the [Abortion Law Reform Association](#) in 1936. The penalty for [abortion](#) had been [reduced from execution to life imprisonment](#) by the [Offences against the Person Act 1861](#), although some exceptions were allowed in the [Infant Life \(Preservation\) Act 1929](#). Following the prosecution of Dr. [Aleck Bourne](#) in 1938, the 1939 [Birkett Committee](#) made recommendations for reform, that like many other women's issues, were set aside at the outbreak of the Second World War.

In The Netherlands , first Dutch female doctor, and [Wilhelmina Drucker](#) were frontwomen in discussing and taking action on the theme reproductive rights. Jacobs started to import pessaria from Germany and gave them out for free to poor women in her praxis.

1940s

In most front line countries, women volunteered or were conscripted for various duties in support of the war effort. In Britain women were drafted and assigned to industrial jobs or to non-combat military service. The British services enrolled 460,000 women. The largest

service [ATS](#) had a maximum of 213,000 women enrolled, many of whom served in combat roles in anti-aircraft gun emplacements. In many countries, such as Germany and the Soviet Union, women volunteered or were conscripted for various duties in support of the war effort. In Germany, women volunteered in the BDM, assisting the Luftwaffe as anti-aircraft gunners, or as guerrilla fighters in Werwolf units behind Allied lines. In the Soviet Union about 820,000 women served in the military as medics, radio operators, or truck drivers, snipers, combat pilots, and junior commanding officers.

The Second World War was involved double duty for many American women—they retained their domestic chores and often added a paid job, especially one related to a war industry. Much more so than in the previous war, large numbers of women were hired for unskilled or semi-skilled jobs in munitions, and barriers against married women taking jobs were eased. The popular icon [Rosie the Riveter](#) became a symbol for a generation of American working women. Some 300,000 women served in U.S. military uniform ([WAC](#), [WAVES](#), etc.). With so many young men gone, sports organizers tried to set up pro women's teams, such as the [All-American Girls Professional Baseball League](#); it closed after the war. Indeed most munitions plants closed, and civilian plants replaced the new women with returning veterans, who had priority.

Second wave

Main article: [Second-wave feminism](#)



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Betty Friedan 1960

Second-wave feminism refers to a period of [feminist](#) activity beginning in the early 1960s and through the late 1980s. Second Wave Feminism has existed continuously since then, and continues to coexist with what some people call Third Wave Feminism. Second wave feminism saw cultural and political inequalities as inextricably linked. The movement encouraged women to understand aspects of their personal lives as deeply politicized, and reflective of a [sexist](#) structure of power. If first-wavers focused on absolute rights such as suffrage, second-wavers were largely concerned with other issues of equality, such as the end to discrimination.

Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, and the rise of Women's Liberation

In 1963, [Betty Friedan](#) published her exposé [The Feminine Mystique](#), giving a voice to the discontent and disorientation many women felt in being shunted into homemaking positions after graduating from college. In the book, Friedan explored the roots of the change in women's roles from essential workforce during World War II to homebound housewife and mother after the war, and assessed the forces that drove this change in perception of women's roles.

Over the following decade, the phrase and concept "[Women's Liberation](#)" began to be discussed.

While people sometimes use the expression "Women's Liberation" to refer to feminism throughout history, the term is relatively recent. "Liberation" has been associated with women's aspirations since 1895, and appears in the context of "women's liberation" in [The Second Sex](#) by Simone de Beauvoir in 1949 which was translated to English in 1953. The phrase "women's liberation" was first used in 1964, and appeared in print in 1966, although the French equivalent, "libération des femmes", was in use as far back as 1911. "Women's liberation" was in use at the 1967 [American Students for a Democratic Society](#) (SDS) convention, which held a panel discussion on it. By 1968, although the term Women's Liberation Front appeared in "[Ramparts](#)" it was starting to refer to the whole women's

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movement. In Chicago, women disillusioned with the [New Left](#) were meeting separately in 1967, and publishing by March 1968. When the [Miss America Pageant](#) was held in September, the media referred to the demonstrations as Women's Liberation, and the [Chicago Women's Liberation Union](#) was formed in 1969. Similar groups with similar titles appeared in many parts of the United States. [Bra-burning](#) (actually a fiction) became associated with the movement, and the media coined other terms such as "libber." **Women's Liberation**, compared to various rival terms for the new feminism which co-existed for a while, captured the popular imagination and has persisted, although today the older term [Women's Movement](#) is used just as frequently.



A Women's Lib march in Washington, D.C. in 1970.

1960s' feminism — and its theory and activism — was informed and fueled by the social, cultural, and political climate of that decade. This was a time when there was an increasing entry of women into higher education, the establishment of academic women's studies courses and departments and feminist thinking in many other related fields such as politics, sociology, history and literature, and a time when there was increasing questioning of accepted standards and authority.

It also became increasingly evident, almost from the beginning, that the Women's Liberation movement consisted of multiple "feminisms" — due to the diverse origins from which groups had coalesced and intersected, and the complexity and contentiousness of the issues involved. Starting in the 1980s, one of the most vocal critics of the whole movement has been [bell hooks](#), who comments on lack of voice by the most oppressed women, glossing over of race and class as inequalities, and failure to address the issues that divided women.

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Feminist writing



Gloria Steinem at news conference, Women's Action Alliance, January 12, 1972

Following the changes in women's consciousness provoked by Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, in the 1970s new feminist activists took on more political and sexual issues in their writings.

Feminist writing in the early 1970s ranges from [Gloria Steinem](#) (*Ms.* magazine 1970), to [Kate Millett](#)'s *Sexual Politics*. Millett's uses her bleak survey of male writers and their attitudes and biases to demonstrate her thesis that sex is politics, and politics is power imbalance in relationships. Her pessimism is reflected in her description of "the desert we inhabit". From the same period come [Shulamith Firestone](#)'s *The Dialectic of Sex*, [Germaine Greer](#)'s *The Female Eunuch*, [Sheila Rowbotham](#)'s and [Juliet Mitchell](#)'s, the following year. Firestone based her concept of revolution on Marxism, referred to the "sex war", and interestingly, in view of the debates over patriarchy, claimed that male domination dated to "back beyond recorded history to the animal kingdom itself". Co-founder of [Redstockings](#), Firestone, considered a radical, put "feminism" back in the vocabulary.

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Greer, Rowbotham and Mitchell represent an English perspective on the growing revolution, but as Mitchell argues, this should be seen as an international phenomenon, but taking on different manifestations relating to local culture. British women too, drew on left political backgrounds, and organised small local discussion groups. Much of this took Bartplace through the and its publications [Shrew](#) and the LWLW Newsletter. Although there were marches, the focus was on what [Kathie Sarachild](#) of Redstockings had called [consciousness-raising](#). One of the functions of this was, as Mitchell describes it was that women would "*find what they thought was an individual dilemma is social predicament*". Women found that their own personal experiences were information that they could trust in formulating political analyses.

Meanwhile in the U.S., women's frustrations crystallised around the failure to ratify the [Equal Rights Amendment](#) during the 1970s. Against this background appeared [Susan Brownmiller's](#) [Against Our Will](#) in 1975, introducing a more explicit agenda directed against male violence, specifically male sexual violence in a treatise on rape. Perhaps her most memorable phrase was "[pornography](#) is the theory and rape the practice", creating a nexus that would cause deep fault lines to develop, largely around the concepts of [objectification](#) and [commodification](#). Brownmiller's other major contribution is (2000), a history of women's liberation. Less well known is *Femininity* (1984) a gentler deconstruction of a concept that has had an uneasy relationship with feminism.

Different feminist views on pornography

Further information: [Feminist Sex Wars](#)

One of the first women to develop the further implications of pornography was [Susan Griffin](#) in [Pornography and Silence](#) (1981). Moving beyond Brownmiller and Griffin's positions are [Catharine MacKinnon](#), and [Andrea Dworkin](#) with whom she collaborated. Their influence in debates and activism on pornography and prostitution has been striking, in particular at the [Supreme Court of Canada](#). MacKinnon, who is a lawyer, has stated: "To be about to be raped is to be gender female in the process of going about life as usual." Sexual harassment, she says "doesn't mean that they all want to fuck us, they just want to hurt us, dominate us, and control us, and that is fucking us." To some, radical feminism is the only

movement that truly expresses the pain of being a woman in an unequal society, and portrays that reality through the experiences of the battered and violated, which they claim to be the norm. To critics, including some feminists, civil libertarians and jurists, this position is uncomfortable and alienating.

A useful evolution of this approach has been to transform the research and perspective on rape from an individual experience to a social problem.

Third wave

Main article: [Third-wave feminism](#)

The Third-wave of feminism began in the early 1990s. The movement arose as responses to what young women thought of as perceived failures of the second-wave. It was also a response to the backlash against initiatives and movements created by the second-wave. Third-wave feminism seeks to challenge or avoid what it deems the second wave's "[essentialist](#)" definitions of [femininity](#), which (according to them) over-emphasized the experiences of upper middle class white women. A [post-structuralist](#) interpretation of gender and sexuality is central to much of the third wave's ideology. Third wave feminists often focus on "micropolitics", and challenged the second wave's paradigm as to what is, or is not, good for females.

In 1991, [Anita Hill](#) accused [Clarence Thomas](#), an African-American man nominated to the Supreme Court, of sexual harassment that had allegedly occurred a decade earlier while Hill worked as his assistant at the U.S. Department of Education. Thomas denied the accusations and after extensive debate, the Senate voted 52-48 in favor of Thomas. In response to this case, Rebecca Walker published an article in a 1992 issue of Ms. titled "Becoming the Third Wave" in which she stated, "I am not a post-feminism feminist. I am the third wave." Hill and Thomas' case brought attention to the ongoing presence of sexual harassment in the workplace and reinstated a sense of concern and awareness in many people who assumed that sexual harassment and other second wave issues had been resolved.

The history of Third Wave feminism predates this and begins in the mid-1980s. Feminist leaders rooted in the second wave like [Gloria Anzaldúa](#), [bell hooks](#), [Cherríe Moraga](#), [Audre Lorde](#), [Luisa Accati](#), [Maxine Hong Kingston](#), and many other feminists of color, called for a new subjectivity in feminist voice. They sought to negotiate prominent space within feminist thought for consideration of race related subjectivities. This focus on the intersection between race and gender remained prominent through the Hill-Thomas hearings, but began to shift with the . This drive to register voters in poor minority communities was surrounded with rhetoric that focused on rallying young feminists. For many, the rallying of the young is the emphasis that has stuck within third wave feminism.

Sexual politics

Queer sexuality

Main article: [Lesbian](#)

One challenge within second wave feminism was the increasing visibility of [lesbianism](#) within and without feminism. Lesbians felt sidelined by both gay liberation and women's liberation, where they were referred to as the "[Lavender Menace](#)", provoking [The Woman-Identified Woman](#) from the [Radicalesbians](#) in 1970. [Jill Johnston's](#) [Lesbian Nation: The Feminist Solution](#) followed in 1973. Many lesbians felt that they should be central to the movement, representing a fundamental threat to male supremacy. In its extreme form this was expressed as the only appropriate choice for a woman. One of the more colourful lesbian feminist writers of this period was [Rita Mae Brown](#). Eventually the lesbian movement was welcomed into the mainstream women's movement. The threat to male assumptions they represented turned out to be real in that their presence in the woman's movement became a target of the male backlash.

Reproductive rights

Main article: [Reproductive rights](#)

One of the main fields of interest to these feminists was in gaining the right to contraception and birth control, which were almost universally restricted until the 1960s. With the

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development of the [first birth control pill](#) feminists hoped to make it as available as soon as possible. Many hoped that this would free women from the perceived burden of mothering children they did not want; they felt that control of reproduction was necessary for full economic independence from men. Access to [abortion](#) was also widely demanded, but this was much more difficult to secure because of the deep societal divisions that existed over the issue. To this day, abortion remains controversial in many parts of the world.

Many feminists also fought to change perceptions of female sexual behaviour. Since it was often considered more acceptable for men to have multiple sexual partners, many feminists encouraged women into "sexual liberation" and having sex for pleasure with multiple partners. (See: [Sexual revolution](#))

These developments in sexual behavior have not gone without criticism by some feminists. They see the sexual revolution primarily as a tool used by men to gain easy access to sex without the obligations entailed by marriage and traditional social norms. They see the relaxation of social attitudes towards sex in general, and the increased availability of [pornography](#) without stigma, as leading towards greater sexual objectification of women by men.

Global feminism

Immediately after the war a new global dimension was added by the formation of the [United Nations](#). In 1946 the UN established a [Commission on the Status of Women](#). Originally as the Section on the Status of Women, Human Rights Division, Department of Social Affairs, and now part of the [Economic and Social Council](#) (ECOSOC). In 1948 the UN issued its [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) which protects "the equal rights of men and women", and addressed both the equality and equity issues. Since 1975 the UN has held a series of world conferences on women's issues, starting with the World Conference of the International Women's Year in Mexico City, heralding the United Nations (1975–1985). These have brought women together from all over the world and provided considerable opportunities for advancing women's rights, but also illustrated the deep divisions in attempting to apply principles universally, in successive conferences in Copenhagen (1980) and Nairobi (1985). However by 1985 some convergence was appearing. These divisions

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amongst feminisms included; First World vs. Third World, the relationship between gender oppression and oppression based on class, race and nationality, defining core common elements of feminism vs. specific political elements, defining feminism, homosexuality, [female circumcision](#), birth and population control, the gulf between researchers and the grass roots, and the extent to which political issues were women's issues. Emerging from Nairobi was a realisation that feminism is not monolithic but *"constitutes the political expression of the concerns and interests of women from different regions, classes, nationalities, and ethnic backgrounds. There is and must be a diversity of feminisms, responsive to the different needs and concerns of women, and defined by them for themselves. This diversity builds on a common opposition to gender oppression and hierarchy which, however, is only the first step in articulating and acting upon a political agenda."* The fourth conference was held in Beijing in 1995. At this conference a the [Beijing Platform for Action](#) was signed. This included a commitment to achieve "[gender equality](#) and the empowerment of women". The most important strategy to achieve this was considered to be "[gender mainstreaming](#)" which incorporates both equity and equality, that is that both women and men should *"experience equal conditions for realising their full human rights, and have the opportunity to contribute and benefit from national, political, economic, social and cultural development"*.

Later development

A few since 2008 believe that we are or may be in a fourth wave of feminism.

National histories of feminism

France

Main article: [Feminism in France](#)

In the 18th century, the [French Revolution](#) focussed people's attention everywhere on the cry for "[égalité](#)", and hence by extension, but in a more limited way, inequity in the treatment of women. In 1791, the [Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen](#) elicited an immediate response from the writer [Olympe de Gouges](#) who amended it as the [Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen](#), arguing that if women were accountable to

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the law they must also be given equal responsibility under the law. She also addressed marriage as a social contract between equals and attacked women's reliance on beauty and charm as a form of slavery.

During the 19th century, conservative postrevolutionary France was not a favourable climate for feminist ideas, as expressed in the counter-revolutionary writings on the role of women by [Joseph de Maistre](#) and [Viscount Louis de Bonald](#). Advancement would have to wait for the revolution of 24 February 1848, and the proclamation of the Second Republic which introduced male suffrage, and hopes that similar benefits would apply to women. Although the Utopian [Charles Fourier](#) is considered a feminist writer of this period, his influence was minimal at the time.

In France, with the fall of the conservative [Louis-Philippe](#) in 1848, feminist hopes were raised, as in 1790. Several newspapers and organizations appeared. [Eugénie Niboyet](#) (1800–1883) founded [La Voix des Femmes](#) (*The Women's Voice*), as the first feminist daily newspaper in France 'a socialist and political journal, the organ of the interests of all women'. Niboyet was a Protestant who had adopted [Saint-Simonianism](#), and *La Voix* attracted other women from that movement, including the seamstress [Jeanne Deroin](#) and the primary schoolteacher [Pauline Roland](#). Unsuccessful attempts were also made to recruit [George Sand](#). The enthusiasm was short lived; feminism which was allied with socialism was seen as a threat as it had been under the previous revolution, Deroin and Roland were both arrested, tried and imprisoned in 1849. With the emergence of a new, more conservative government in 1852, feminism would have to wait until the [Third French Republic](#).

The were women intellectuals at the beginning of the 20th century who translated part of Bachofen's cannon into French, and campaigned for the reform of family law. In 1905 they founded which published articles on women's history, and became the focus for the intellectual avant garde advocating higher education for women and entry into the professions. Meanwhile socialist feminists, the , adopted a Marxist version of matriarchy. But like the Groupe Français, they saw the struggle as being for a new age of equality, not a return to some kind of prehistorical matriarchy. [French feminism](#) of the late 20th century is

mainly associated with the psychoanalytical [Feminist theory](#), notably with the thinking of [Luce Irigaray](#), [Julia Kristeva](#) and [Hélène Cixous](#).

Germany

Main article:



Louise Otto-Peters

The organized German women's movement is widely attributed to writer and feminist [Louise Otto-Peters](#) (1819-1895).

Iran

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Board of directors of "[Jam'iat e nesvan e vatan-khah](#)", a women's right association in Tehran (1923-1933)

For more details on this topic, see [Women's rights movement in Iran](#).

The **Iranian women's movement**, involves [Iranian women's social movement](#) for [women's rights](#). The movement first emerged, some time after [Iranian Constitutional Revolution](#), in 1910, the year in which the first Women Journal was published by women. The movement lasted until 1933 in which the last women's association was dissolved by the [Reza Shah's](#) government. It heightened again after the [Iranian Revolution](#) (1979). The most important feminist figures in this time are [Bibi Khanoom Astarabadi](#), , [Sediqeh Dowlatabadi](#), [Mohtaram Eskandari](#), , , , [Noor-ol-Hoda Mangeneh](#) (1902-?), [Zandokht Shirazi](#), ().

After the [Iranian Revolution](#) in 1979, the status of women quickly deteriorated. With passage of time, many of the rights that women had gained under Shah, were systematically abolished, through legislation, elimination of women from work, and of course forced Hejab.

In 1992, [Shahla Sherkat](#) founded [Zanan](#) (Women) magazine, which focused on the concerns of Iranian women and tested the political waters with its edgy coverage of reform politics, domestic abuse, and sex. It is the most important Iranian women's journal published after the Iranian revolution, systematically criticizing the Islamic legal code. It argues that gender equality is Islamic and that religious literature has been misread and misappropriated by misogynists. Mehangiz Kar, Shahla Lahiji, and Shahla Sherkat, the editor of *Zanan*, lead the debate on women's rights and demanded reforms. On August 27, 2006, a new women's rights campaign was launched in Iran. The "[One Million](#)

[Signatures](#)" campaign aims to end legal discrimination against women in Iranian laws by collecting a million signatures. The supporters of this campaign include many Iranian women's rights activists and also international activists as well as many Nobel laureates. The most important after revolution feminist figures are [Mehrangiz Kar](#), [Azam Taleghani](#), [Shahla Sherkat](#), [Parvin Ardalan](#), [Noushin Ahmadi khorasani](#), [Shadi Sadr](#).

Egypt



Huda Shaarawi, founder of the [Egyptian Feminist Union](#)

In 1899, [Qasim Amin](#), considered the "father" of , wrote , which argued for legal and social reforms for women. [Hoda Shaarawi](#) founded the [Egyptian Feminist Union](#) in 1923, and became its president and a symbol of the Arab women's rights movement. Arab feminism was closely connected with [Arab nationalism](#). In 1956, President [Nasser](#) initiated as part of his government "[state feminism](#)", which outlawed discrimination based on gender and granted women's suffrage. Despite these reforms, "state feminism" blocked political activism by feminist leaders and brought an end to the first-wave feminist movement in Egypt. During [Sadat](#)'s presidency, his wife, [Jehan Sadat](#), publicly advocated for further women's rights, though Egyptian policy and society began to move away from women's equality with the new [Islamist](#) movement and growing conservatism. However, writers such as , for example, argued that women's full equality is an important part of Islam. This position formed a new feminist movement, [Islamic feminism](#), which is still active today.

India

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Main article: [Feminism in India](#)

With the rise of feminism across the world, a new generation of Indian feminists has emerged. Women have developed themselves according to the situations and have become advanced in various fields. They have become independent in respect of their reproductive rights. Contemporary Indian feminists are fighting for and against: individual autonomy, rights, freedom, independence, tolerance, cooperation, nonviolence and diversity, domestic violence, gender, stereotypes, [sexuality, discrimination](#), sexism, non-objectification, freedom from [patriarchy](#), the right to an [abortion](#), [reproductive rights](#), control of the female body, the right to a divorce, equal pay, maternity leave, breast feeding, prostitution, and education. [Medha Patkar](#), [Madhu Kishwar](#), and [Brinda Karat](#) are feminist social workers and politicians who advocate women's rights in post-independent India. Writers such as [Amrita Pritam](#), [Sarojini Sahoo](#) and Kusum Ansal advocate feminist ideas in Indian languages. Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan, Leela Kasturi, Sharmila Rege, and Vidyut Bhagat are Indian feminist essayists and critics writing in English.

China



Wealthy Chinese women with bound feet (Beijing, 1900). Foot binding was a symbol of women's oppression during the reform movements in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Feminism in China began in the late [Qing period](#), as Chinese society re-evaluated traditional and [Confucian](#) values such as [foot binding](#) and gender segregation, and began to

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reject traditional gender ideas as hindering progress towards [modernization](#). During the 1898 [Hundred Days' Reform](#), reformers called for women's education and equality, and the end of foot binding. Female reformers formed the first Chinese women's society—the Society for the Diffusion of Knowledge among Chinese Women (*Nüxuehuao*). After the collapse of the Qing Dynasty, [women's liberation](#) became a goal of the [May Fourth Movement](#) and the [New Culture Movement](#). Later, the [Chinese Communist Revolution](#) adopted women's liberation as one of its aims and promoted women's equality, especially regarding women's participation in the workforce. After the revolution and progress in integrating women into the workforce, the [Chinese Communist Party](#) claimed to have successfully achieved women's liberation, and women's inequality was no longer seen as a problem.

Second and third-wave feminism in China was characterized by a re-examination of women's roles during the reform movements of the early 20th century and the way in which feminism was adopted by those various movements in order to achieve their goals. Later and current feminists have questioned whether gender equality has actually been fully achieved, and discuss current gender problems, such as the large [gender disparity](#) in the population.

Japan

Further information: [Feminism in modern Japan](#)

Japanese feminism as an organized political movement dates back to the early years of the 20th century, when [Kato Shidzue](#) pushed for [birth-control](#) availability as part of a broad spectrum of [progressive](#) reforms. Shidzue went on to serve in the [National Diet](#) following the defeat of Japan in World War II and the promulgation of the [Peace Constitution](#) by US forces. Other figures such as [Hayashi Fumiko](#) and [Ariyoshi Sawako](#) illustrate the broad socialist ideologies of Japanese feminism, that seeks to accomplish broad goals rather than celebrate the individual achievements of powerful women.

Norway

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Camilla Collett

Further information: [History of Women in Norway](#)

Feminism in Norway has its political origins in the movement for [women's suffrage](#). Women's issues were first articulated in the public sphere by [Camilla Collett](#) (1813–1895), widely considered the first Norwegian feminist. Originating from a literary family, she wrote a novel and several articles on the difficulties facing women of her time, and in particular forced marriages. [Amalie Skram](#) (1846–1905) also gave voice to a woman's point of view with her [naturalist](#) writing.

The [Norwegian Association for Women's Rights](#) was founded in 1884 by [Gina Krog](#) and Hagbart Berner. The organization raised issues related to women's rights to education and economic self-determination, and above all, universal suffrage. Women's right to vote was passed by law, June 11, 1913 by the Norwegian Parliament. Norway was the second country in Europe after Finland to have full suffrage for women.

Poland

Main article: [Feminism in Poland](#)

The development of feminism in Poland and Polish territories has traditionally been divided into seven successive "waves".

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The 1920s saw the emergence of [radical feminism](#) in Poland. Its representatives, Irena Krzywicka and Maria Morozowicz-Szczepkowska, advocated women's independence from men. Krzywicka and [Tadeusz Żeleński](#) both promoted [planned parenthood](#), [sexual education](#), rights to divorce and abortion, and equality of sexes. Krzywicka published a series of articles in *Wiadomości Literackie* in which she protested against interference by the [Roman Catholic Church](#) in the intimate lives of Poles.

After the Second World War, the Polish [Communist](#) state (established in 1948) forcefully promoted women's emancipation at home and at work. However, during Communist rule (until 1989), feminism in general, and second-wave feminism in particular, were practically absent. Although feminist texts were produced in the 1950s and afterwards, they were usually controlled and generated by the Communist state. After the fall of Communism, the Polish government, dominated by 'pro-Catholic' political parties, introduced a *de facto* legal ban on abortions. Since then some feminists have adopted argumentative strategies borrowed from the American '[Pro-Choice](#)' movement of the 1980s.

History of selected feminist issues

The history of feminist theory

Main article: [Feminist theory](#)



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Simone de Beauvoir

Nancy Cott draws a distinction between *modern feminism* and its antecedents, particularly the struggle for suffrage. In the United States she places the turning point in the decades before and after women obtained the vote in 1920 (1910–1930). She argues that the prior *woman movement* was primarily about woman as a [universal](#) entity, whereas over this 20 year period it transformed itself into one primarily concerned with social differentiation, attentive to [individuality](#) and diversity. New issues dealt more with woman's condition as a [social construct](#), gender identity, and relationships within and between genders. Politically this represented a shift from an ideological alignment comfortable with the right, to one more radically associated with the left.

In the immediate postwar period, [Simone de Beauvoir](#) stood in opposition to an image of "the woman in the home". De Beauvoir provided an [existentialist](#) dimension to feminism with the publication of *Le Deuxième Sexe* ([The Second Sex](#)) in 1949. While more philosopher and novelist than activist, she did sign one of the Mouvement de Libération des Femmes manifestos. The resurgence of feminist activism in the late 1960s was accompanied by an emerging literature of what might be considered female associated issues, such as concerns for the earth and spirituality, and environmental activism. This in turn created an atmosphere conducive to reigniting the study of and debate on matricentricity, as a rejection of [determinism](#), such as [Adrienne Rich](#) and [Marilyn French](#) while for [socialist feminists](#) like [Evelyn Reed](#), patriarchy held the properties of capitalism.

[Elaine Showalter](#) describes the development of Feminist theory as having a number of phases. The first she calls "feminist critique" – where the feminist reader examines the ideologies behind literary phenomena. The second Showalter calls "[Gynocritics](#)" – where the "woman is producer of textual meaning" including "the [psychodynamics](#) of female creativity; [linguistics](#) and the problem of a female language; the trajectory of the individual or collective female literary career [and] [literary history](#)". The last phase she calls "gender theory" – where the "ideological inscription and the literary effects of the [sex/gender system](#)" are explored." This model has been criticized by [Toril Moi](#) who sees it as

an [essentialist](#) and [deterministic](#) model for female subjectivity. She also criticized it for not taking account of the situation for women outside the west.

Sociology of the family debate

Ann Taylor Allen describes the striking gulf between the collective male pessimism and fin-de-siècle angst of male intellectuals such as [Ferdinand Tönnies](#), [Max Weber](#), and [Georg Simmel](#), at the beginning of the 20th century, compared to the optimism of their female counterparts, whose contributions have largely been ignored by social historians of the era. Feminists were well aware of Weber's "iron cage", it is just that they saw it as a starting point, not a finishing point.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the sociology of the family was one of the more prominent concerns of feminist theorists, who have been incorrectly typified as accepting the historical fact of primal matriarchy, whereas their interest was more in an empowering symbolism in interpreting the social issues they confronted. They used Bachofen and the rejection of an inevitable patriarchy to address family law reform and sexual morality. Feminists were sceptical about the objectivity of those who wrote about objective culture, as expressed in their perceived androcentricity. , leader of Groupe Français d'Etudes Féministes, went so far as to state that male rejection of Bachofen by male intellectuals was good enough reasons for females to embrace him. She rejected the emotion-rationalism dichotomy association with matriarchy and patriarchy, and with Stanton, asserted that rationality was as much an attribute of any mother-age civilisation as of patriarchy, and that it was mainly patriarchal behaviour that was logically irrational.

In English academic circles, the challenge to patriarchy started to permeate a variety of disciplines. [Jane Ellen Harrison](#), a classicist, working from [Friedrich Nietzsche's](#) Bachofen inspired interpretation view of Greek culture argued that it was a shift in Pantheons that influenced the loss of matrilineal Greek culture with its more "primitive" pantheistic deities to a patriarchate both on Olympus and on Earth. Many other feminist theorists incorporated matriarchal approaches. These include the American [Charlotte Perkins Gilman](#) and British [Frances Swiney](#). Gilman developed the idea of matriarchate as imaginative, pointing out how the trivial male role of fertilisation was responsible for "arresting the development of

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half the world" and depicts how rationality and emotionality can co-exist harmoniously in her utopian novel [Herland](#).

Swiney utilised Bachofen's work and his successors, such as [Mona Caird](#), in addressing the social concerns of suffragettes, including [sexually transmitted disease](#), infant mortality and [prostitution](#), and founded a group, the that produced a number of empowering works. These women's work in turn would be popularised by the reform minded periodicals of the time (such as , , [Westminster Review](#)).

More controversial, was the way these views were used to uphold or challenge the standards of sexual morality, which were very asymmetrical. Generally British writers upheld the standards but expected them to apply to men equally, while in the Netherlands and Germany they were challenged.

While the majority of feminists supported enforcement of paternal responsibility, the minority used the more radical matriliney argument that support of mothers and children was a state responsibility, and that women should not be humiliated by pursuing fathers. In Holland this was the (Free Women), through their journal , edited by in the 1890s. In Germany () founded the (League for the Protection of Mothers) in 1905, and took this further advocating a matriarchal society of single mothers, while the league attracted many prominent reformers, female and male, including [Helene Stöcker](#), [Lily Braun](#) and , they did not support her radicalism, believing that the genders should not be separated in a more evolved social model.

However all groups supported equality of rights. The inspiration for these views came largely from [Ellen Key](#) in Sweden who believed that matrilineality was closest to nature. The Bund für Mutterschutz advanced the "" of women controlling their own sexual and reproductive needs, as a creative and life providing force. For instance Fürth believed that motherhood transcended marriage. Disproportionate to their numerical size, these sexual radicals set a new agenda for the discussion of morality in the west. Understandably, many saw these new ideas as alarming, and threatening.

The moderate majority is represented by groups such as the [Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine](#) (League of German Women's Organizations) led by [Marianne Weber](#) (who was married to [Max Weber](#)), and who warned against belief in "lost paradise". Weber repudiated Bachofen in her "Wife and Mother in Legal History" along socialist interpretations, distinguishing between matrilineality and the status of women. Interestingly she argued for marriage to protect the status of children, without doubting the need for this in the first place. However she also rejected the inevitability of the status quo, portrayed further evolution to equality, reform of family law, and although describing monogamy as an ideal, went so far to suggest it was not for everyone, and that non-monogamous relationships were not immoral, views she shared with her husband.

In France, [Madeleine Pelletier](#) was equally sceptical about historical patriarchy, but more so some of her colleagues flowery symbolism which she suspected was actually confining. In a foreshadowing of Betty Friedan she pithily summed up the hiatus between male worship of the goddess and emancipation "*Future societies may build temples to motherhood, but only to lock women into them.*" She also held, what for those times were radical views on the need for women to control their reproductive rights.

In striking contrast to Freudian theory is his contemporary feminist , whose appeared in the same year as [Totem and Taboo](#), based on the same material. To Hartley (also known as), Atkinson's readings were biased, and that it could easily have been the actions of women opposing patriarchy that brought about matriarchy, if only short lived. But to her patriarchy was equally unstable, and she saw the latter day women's movement as one restoring social justice. "*It is the day of experiments...We are questioning where before we have accepted, and are seeking out new ways in which mankind will go...will go because it must*".

However, despite all of these disagreements, there were common elements, an acceptance of some form of nonpatrilineal kinship in the past, the evolution of family kinship structures, and a belief in the evanescent nature of the status quo. Common to both male and female socialist writers were challenges to traditional views of family, this includes Gilman, Braun, Fürth and .

Some of the most radical ideas in American writing are found in [Elsie Clews Parsons'](#) "" (used as a textbook), which included premarital sexual relationships, trial marriage and sexual liberation from better provision of contraception. These views attracted some negative media publicity, however discussions about kinship were now widely held. [Countess Franziska zu Reventlow](#) was a bohemian who became a member of the mainly male Georgekreis ([George circle](#)), but parodied them, and predicted the sinister outcome of their male Dionysian view of liberated women.

Thus, most of what seemed radical ideas of the late 20th century had already been described in the early years of the century.

Psychoanalysis and feminism

Main article: [Psychoanalytic feminism](#)

Psychoanalytic theory emerged during the debate on kinship, and kinship and gender relations form the core of the theoretical writings, and has been portrayed as one of the elements containing feminism. Its origins can be found in the Romantic, and in particular Bachofen's representation. The matriarchy-patriarchy conflict is central to [Sigmund Freud's](#) work, and to the schism that followed between him and [Carl Jung](#).

Freud's theories can be seen to be centred around the triangular [Oedipus complex](#), the patricidal relation between child and father, and incestuous desire for the mother, as a model for the development of each individual's personality. The correspondence between Freud and Jung reveals their conflicting concepts of universal patriarchy on the former's part, and the yearning for liberation and return to matriarchy of the latter.

Freud disliked feminist sexual radicalism, but echoed some of it "*Mother-right should not be confused with gynaeocracy*". The centrality of Oedipal desire is best expressed in [Totem und Tabu](#) (1913). He based his anthropological speculation on the work of , who in turn was influenced by [Darwin](#). Freud proceeded to layer Greek myth onto the Darwinian [ethology](#) of the herd and the polygamous dominant male, challenged by its male offspring, a position challenged by anthropologists, but which became influential in 20th-century culture. In

Freudian analysis, Bachofen's world is now seen as the story of individual psychological evolution, a psychic recasting of [ontogeny mirroring phylogeny](#).

See also

- [Bluestocking](#)
- [Feme covert](#)
- [Feminism in 1950s Britain](#)
- [New Woman](#)
- [Radical Women](#)
- [Redstockings](#)
- [Timeline of women's rights \(other than voting\)](#)
- [Women's Music](#)

Feminism and costume:

- [Brassiere](#)
- [History of brassieres](#)
- [Victorian dress reform](#)

Further reading

For a chronological list of historically important individual books see: [List of notable feminist literature](#)

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 - III. Renaissance and the Enlightenment Paradoxes

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External links

- [Timeline of feminist history in the USA](#)
- [The Women's Library \(holds and displays material relating to women and feminism in the UK\)](#)
- [The history of poetry in the women's movement](#) by [Honor Moore](#) in the *[Boston Review](#)*
- [Important Dates in Women's History in the USA](#)

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